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FOREIGN NOTES

RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT LA TÊNE

In accordance with the plans to which we have already alluded,[1] the committee in charge of the exploration of La Têne began work on the station early in March 1907, and continued until the middle of June, when, on account of the high water in the Lake of Neuchatel caused by the melting of snow and ice in the Juras, it was necessary to cease operations until autumn, when they were again resumed.

La Têne — the name applied to the only known settlement or station dating from the Iron age on the Lake of Neuchatel, Switzerland — was situated near the northeastern corner of the lake, at the end of the small stream — La Thièle — which flowed from that lake to the Lake of Bienne.

Some thirty years ago a canal was constructed between the lakes. It followed the general course of the stream, but was so deepened as to cause the lowering of the surface of the Lake of Neuchatel about three meters. Now as the southern, or Neuchatel, end of the canal is a short distance east of the old water course, the site of the ancient pile settlement is at the present time dry except when the waters of the lake are unusually high.

It would be difficult to tell the exact depth of the water at the time the site was occupied, but it was probably not more than two meters, rather less than under some of the older settlements of the Bronze or Stone ages.

Subsequent to the time La Têne was last occupied, which was probably during the first century of the Christian era, the stream changed its course, thereby washing away some of the ancient substructures and covering others with sand and gravel. Consequently it is rather difficult to designate the exact bounds of the ancient village.

In fig. *a*, pl. XVI, is shown a view of the site as it appeared March 26, 1907, a few days after the beginning of the exploration. The strata in which the objects occur are below the temporary track shown in the photograph. The mass of sand and gravel which is shown being cut away by the workmen has been deposited since the site was abandoned.

In making the photograph shown as fig. *b*, the camera was placed on the top of the elevation visible on the right of the track, in the foreground of fig. *a*. As will be seen, the deeper parts of the excavation are filled with water. This came in from the lake and was the reason why the work was stopped in June.

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[1] *American Anthropologist*, 1906, vol. 8, no. 4, p. 737; also in *Man*, 8, London, 1907.

Unfortunately the discoveries were of no special importance and only one new type was found. This resembles a light hammer and consists of a slender bar of iron having at one end a transverse piece extending about 4 cm. on either side. The other end of the bar is set into a bone handle, which had been smoothed and rounded.

Among the objects discovered are several rather large knives, two horse bits, a number of iron rings of different sizes. Several adzes and axes had, remaining in the sockets, parts of their wooden handles. Numerous fibulæ of La Têne II type were found, but all were in a bad state of preservation. One small example of red enamel was also recovered from the excavation.

Work is to be continued on the site until the entire area has been explored and as a result much valuable material will probably be brought to light. An account of the work during the year 1907 is about to be published by the Musée Historique of Neuchatel, Switzerland.

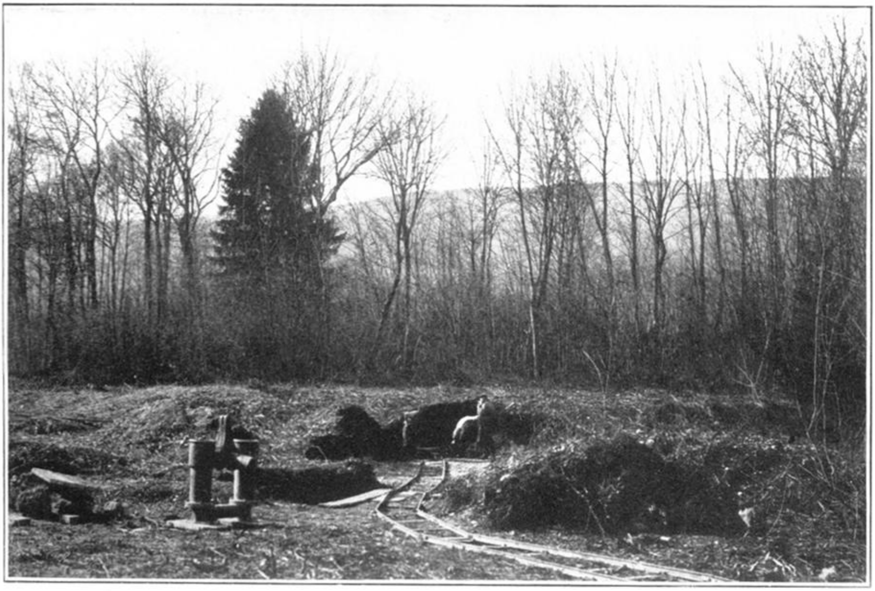
D. I. BUSHNELL, JR.

THE BEGINNING OF IRON

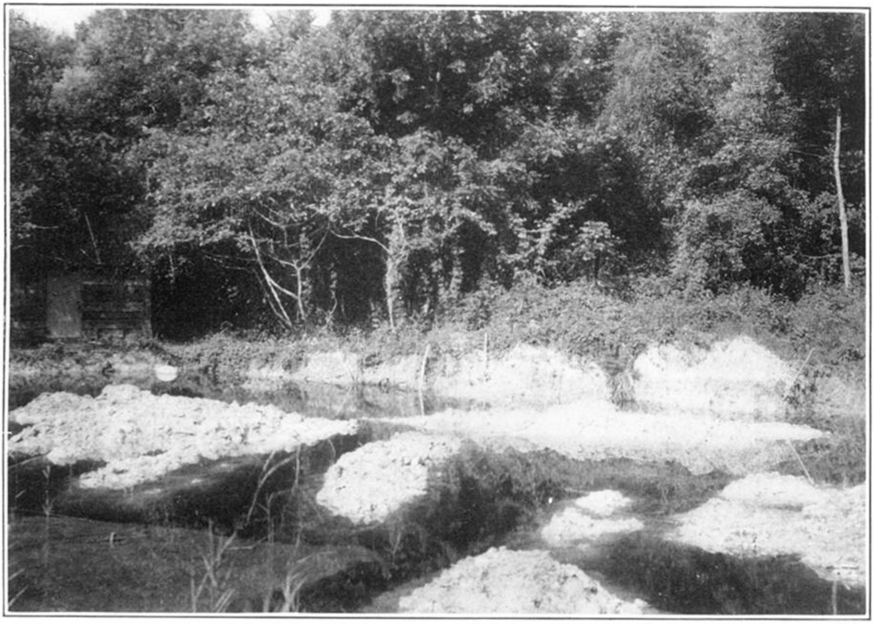
During the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Leicester, England, July–August 1907, Professor W. Ridgeway, of Cambridge, presented a most interesting paper on "The Beginning of Iron."

A summary of the paper, quoted from p. 644 of the official report of the meeting, follows:

"Formerly it was generally believed that iron was the gift of Africa to mankind, and, if not of Africa, most certainly of Asia. Modern research has shown that Egypt did not use iron until about 800 B. C., that the Libyans were not using it in 480 B. C., and that the Semitic peoples did not use it from a remote past, but that they borrowed it comparatively late. I urged in 1896 and in 1902 that Central Europe was the true center of the use of iron as a *metal*, and that it was first diffused from Noricum. At Hallstatt iron was seen coming into use first to decorate bronze, then to form the edge of cutting implements; next it gradually replaced bronze weapons, and finally took new forms of its own. Everywhere else iron as a *metal* came into use *per saltum*. Man probably found it ready smelted by nature, as the Eskimo discovered it at Regent's Bay



a. Beginning the Excavation, March 26, 1907



b. Showing the Excavation filled with Water from the Lake, July 12, 1907

EXCAVATIONS AT LA TÊNE

and at Ovifak. Some still imagine that it was used very early in Egypt, because its name occurs in early documents; but this is readily explained, since hematite was known and used very early in Egypt, and the same material was used very commonly in the Ægean long before the Bronze age. But it was treated not as a *metal* to be smelted, but as a stone to be ground into axes and beads. The Egyptians thus knew the mineral and had a name for it, which they continued to employ when they had learned its use as a *metal* from Europe. Others also cling to the belief that iron was worked in Central Africa from a remote time. But in Uganda, which was in touch with Egypt by means of the great lakes and the Nile, iron, as I am informed by the Rev. J. Roscoe, became first known in the reign of a king about nineteen reigns back (about five hundred or four hundred years ago). This renders it very unlikely that the metal was worked until very late in Central Africa. It is certain that the peoples beyond the Caspian, as well as those along the Indian Ocean, did not use iron till quite late; that India herself did not know it at an early date, and that Japan got it only about A. D. 700; yet some still imagine that it must have been known to the Chinese from remote antiquity. But the earliest mention of iron in Chinese literature is about 400 B. C., whilst a bronze sword belonging to Canon Greenwell has an inscription read by Professor Giles which dates it between 247 B. C. and 220 B. C. There is evidence that bronze swords were being used till A. D. 100, and that it was only then that iron swords were coming in. It is now clear that the use of iron as a *metal* is due to Central Europe."

OLD NORTH AMERICAN CLUB IN THE LEIDEN MUSEUM

Many of the older European museums, and especially those in the countries which had intercourse with the colonies during the early days, possess rare old objects from North America. These were carried back by the traders or explorers and kept as curiosities, later to find their way to museums where they are now preserved. Such is probably the history of an excellent old club in the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum at Leiden. Although nothing is known of its early history, it was evidently taken back from New Amsterdam, as it is the type of weapon used by the Iroquois and eastern Algonquian tribes. It is made of maple, turned dark with age and highly polished from use. The dimensions are: extreme length, 555 mm.; greatest diameter of the ball or knob, 102 mm.; thickness of the handle, 30 mm.

As shown in the accompanying figure 89, there is a perforation above the handle or grip, while on the outer edge, near the perforation, are twelve small notches. The weapon is not decorated, but in form it closely resembles a highly decorated example in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, which has already been described (*Man*, 59, London, 1907). The specimen is also figured in Mr Holmes' paper on Tomahawks on page 271 of this issue of the *American Anthropologist.*

We are indebted to Dr J. D. E. Schmeltz, director of the Leiden Museum, for a photograph and the description of this rare specimen. D. I. BUSHNELL, JR.

FIRST DOCTOR'S THESIS IN ANTHROPOLOGY IN SOUTH AMERICA

The first student in South America to take his degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology is Fernando Thibon, whose thesis bears the title *La región mastoidea de los cráneos Calchaquíes. Estudio hecho sobre 100 cráneos* (Buenos Aires, 1907, pp. 72), and is a detailed study with measurements and drawings of the mastoid processes of 100 skulls from the Calchaqui region of the Argentine. Differences between Calchaqui and European skulls are brought out. The work done is most creditable. Dr Thibon was a student under Dr Robert Lehmann-Nitsche, professor of anthropology in the National University of Buenos Aires, who suggested the subject of investigation and under whose auspices the monograph was executed. The University of Buenos Aires is to be congratulated upon this distinct recognition of anthropological science. It is just sixteen years since the first doctorate in anthropology was conferred in North America. ALEXANDER F. CHAMBERLAIN.

COLLECTION OF OLD OBJECTS FROM THE NORTHWEST COAST

A collection of objects of the Eskimo, Aleut, and Tlingit, from the ancient Russian possessions in northwestern America, which have remained almost entirely unknown for nearly a century in the Imperial Arsenal of Tzarskoe-Selo at St Petersburg, Russia, were recently transferred by order of the Emperor to the Alexander III Museum. Pro-

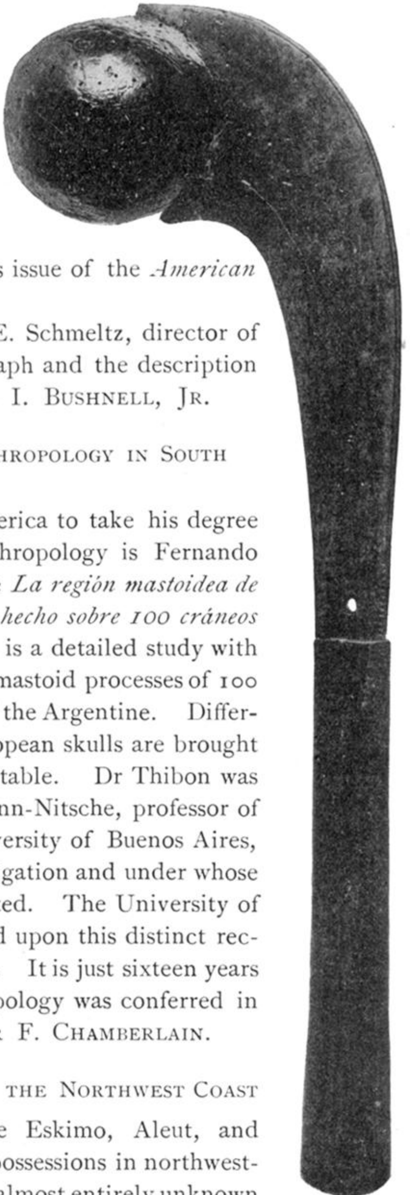


FIG. 89.—Old North American Club in the Leiden Museum.

fessor Th. Volkov, who is in charge of the Museum, is engaged in studying the material and in preparing an account of it, which will probably appear toward the close of the year as the first purely scientific publication of the Alexander Museum. Professor Volkov states that the collection is a remarkable one, and having been collected at a period when the tribes of the Russian Possessions were practically unmodified, it possesses great ethnological importance. WALTER HOUGH.